companies are yet to complete formalities to convert them into Licences.

(b) 2 companies *viz.*, M/s. Bharti Telent Ltd, and M/s. Reliance Telecom Pvt. Ltd. after having paid the first instalment of Licence fee, have signed the Licence and Interconnect Agreements for Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat Service Areas respectively.

(c) Government has made appropriate efforts to resolve the issues raised by them. Their LOIs will be converted into Licences soon after the receipt of requisite Licence fee for the first year.

Status of LOI providing Cellular Services

4128. SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the status of the LOIs issued for providing cellular services in various States;

(b) whether all LOI holders have executed the licence agreement and paid the first instalment of licence fee; and

(c) if not, the name of defaulters and action being taken against them?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) and (b) All the 8 LOIs issued for four metro cities and 33 LOIs out of the 34 LOIs issued for Telecom Circles, have been converted into licence agreements. All LOI holders except one have executed the licence agreement and paid the first instalment of licence fee.

(c) One company, namely M/s HHS Communications Pvt. Ltd. who was awarded LOI for Tamil Nadu Circle, have not executed the licence agreement. The bank guarantee of the company for earnest money deposit was invoked. However, the company has filed a petition in Chennai High Court. The Hon'ble Court has restrained the bank from making the payment. The case is at present sub judice.

Report of Working Group of Standards for Telecom Equipments

4129. SHRI: GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the working group set to lay down standards for telecom equipment components and infrastructure has submitted its report to Government;

(b) if so, the details of the observations/recommendations made by the working group;

(c) Government's reaction thereto and the details of action taken thereon;

(d) the present status of the proposal; and

(e) by when, Government are to take final view and decide upon in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Standards & Specification for telecom equipment & components and infrastructure are being laid down by Telecom Eegineering Centre. There is no separate Working Group to lay down standards for all telecom equipments.

(b) to (e) Does not arise in view of above.

Non-fulfilment of commitments by ESSAR and USHA Group

4130. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to encash the guarantees of two basic telecom companies viz. ESSAR and USHA Group Telecom;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have

calculated the total financial loss suffered because of non-fulfilment of the commitments by these companies;

(d) whether any of these companies have behaved in a similar manner for other commitments in telecom field;

(e) whether Government are thinking of blacklisting these companies for lapses on their part; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) These two companies were issued Letter of Intent which was accepted by them. However, they failed to sumbit the Performance Bank Guarantee and Financial Bank Guarantee of requisite amounts required to be furnished in accordance with the provisions of tender documents as well as instructions contained in the letter of Intent. Therefore, on account of non-compliance of aforesaid terms and conditions Government invoked their Earnest Money Bank Guarantees of Rs. 25 crores in case of M/s Essar and of Rs. 5 crores in case of M/s. Techno Telecom (Usha Group). These companies thereafter filed civil suits in the High Court of Delhi and their cases are sub-judice.

(c) Government has already taken action by ordering for feiture of their Earnest Money Ban Guarantees in accordance with the provisions contained in the tender terms and conditions.

(d) No such lapse/instance has come to notice so far.

(e) and (f) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

Post Offices in Villages and Gram Panchayats in Maharashtra

4131. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of villages including Gram Panchayats in Maharashtra where opening of Post Office is justified according to population and distance parameters are still without post offices;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps Government propose to take to provide post offices at such villages and Gram panchayats in Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There are 941 villages including Gram Panchayat villages in Maharashtra Circle which justify opening of post office on the two norms of distance and population.

(c) A target of opening 35 EDBOs has been fixed for Annual Plan 1977-98 for Maharashtra Circle, where 35 such villages which would justify opening of a post office on the basis of all the three norms of population, distance and income would be covered subject to availability of resources, Post Offices are opened progressively under Annual Plans subject to norm based justification and availability of resources, while examining the proposals, preference is given to Gram Panchayat Head Quarter Villages. All the 941 villages referred to in (b) may not justify opening of a post office on the financial norm.